



## A God That Works Night Shift

**Exodus 14:21 KJV** *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.*

### I. INTRODUCTION – NIGHT SHIFT

There once was a time in my life when I was confined to that troubling and sleep disrupting place. It is called night shift. For several years, Teresa and I both, were imprisoned by working night shift in the hospital. Teresa in Labor and Delivery and I worked in the SICU. On more times than I care to remember, at 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. when everyone else in the city would be comfortably asleep in some warm bed somewhere, a battle for life would be ensuing. While the city slept on, strong medicine and stiff resolve would help a patient make it through one more night.

I can remember that there were some whom I worked with who said that for them it was night shift or nothing. They had somehow become so accustomed to working the hours when the rest of the world was asleep, that they would never again work during the day time. But as for my wife and I we never managed to get acclimated to working when we were supposed to be asleep. In fact, if I had it my way the world wouldn't start until about 10 every morning. But I am not here to preach about my preferences. I am here to preach about a God who works "night shift."

### II. THE STORY BEHIND THE TEXT

-There is an incredible story that lives behind this single verse that we read in the Book of Exodus. Israel found themselves locked in position as servants for four-hundred years and now the time has come for them to escape from the deadly clutches of a vile Pharoah.

-Moses delivers the message to the king and his court that God has instructed for Israel to be set free. After a series of plagues that literally stood Egypt on its head, the Jews finally began a mass exodus of the land. The leave in haste as the land is wrapped in the grief of its loss of all of its firstborn.

#### A. The Exit From Egypt

-A very short period of time passes and the Pharoah decides that he cannot allow these slaves to escape. He still needs them to build his vast empire. So he orders his armies along with their chariots to pursue them and they are going to turn them around and take them back to Egypt.

-So the pursuit ensues and suddenly they are gaining ground on the Israelites. I am sure that Israel looked over their shoulders and began to tremble at the possibilities of being overtaken. It appeared that they were going to die in the wilderness.

-But the narrative of Exodus 14 tells us that God had been working in their behalf. In fact, Scripture informs us that God had been working all throughout the night. He had been working in a place that they could not see.

-Israel had to enter the dark and marshy borders of the Red Sea. There are occasions in the lives of every man when God seemingly withdraws His presence, to remove Himself, or to "go behind" us so we cannot see Him. . . . . This is a God who works the night shift.

-There is a great advantage in our souls when God appears temporarily withdrawn.

**Psalms 119:71 KJV** *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

#### B. The Principle of Going Forward

-The whole situation was for Israel to go forward. The first temptation in an hour of real darkness and supreme difficulty is to retreat. But the order came from Moses to go forward.

-The sea was what Pharaoh counted on to be the destruction of the Israelites but instead it first became their defense and then it turned into their avenger.

-Except for the two walls of water, Pharaoh's army could have outflanked them on all sides. God can at time turn dangers into safeguards. When persecutors threaten the church, He can turn their swords against each other and allow the Church to pass through in peace.

-When temptations assail the soul, God can give the soul such strength that it conquers them and they become aids to its progress.

-With equal ease God can make the danger that menaces the faithful man to fall not on him but on his adversaries.

- The furnace heated to consume the Hebrews destroyed the Babylonians.
- The lions of Darius did not devour Daniel but those men who accused him.
- The Jews who determined to destroy the Early church by influencing the Romans against Jesus and the Apostles were themselves within 40 years almost exterminated by the same Romans.

### **III. THE HISTORY OF PENTECOST**

-There was a time in Church History, in fact, not too many years after the Day of Pentecost, that men began to want to control what God was doing in the lives of the saints. So Bibles were removed and the only people who could read them were the church hierarchy. Religion became cold and was confined to stained glass and cathedrals.

-The Church descended into the Dark Ages and men put the clamps on God. But hidden in little hovels and cottages there were those who still continued to pray and seek after the Lord. The Holy Ghost would empower little pockets of revival. One of the heartbeats and motivations of the prayers of these little pockets of saints was that revival would begin to spring up in the world.

-More times than not, it appeared as if their prayers were being unanswered. But God was stirring in the night. Little by little, men began to come on the scene to restore the Church back to its primitive roots.

- In the 1700's a circuit riding Methodist preacher named Peter Cartwright began to circulate throughout the country, preaching in brush arbors and camp-meeting type places. There was one particular location that stood out as a place of great revival and that was Cane Ridge, Kentucky. There are even some historians who document that a couple named Tom and Nancy experienced the Holy Ghost. They would have never been remembered, except for the fact that they had a son who would be marked by his parents relationship with God. He would change the face of history during his lifetime. His name was Abraham or shortened to Abe, sometimes called Honest Abe. He became the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States and would abolish slavery. It was God working the night shift.

- In the 1800's along came a staid and formal man who would effect his world. He was a lawyer and he was tired of the formality of the Presbyterian church. He found himself hungry for a deeper walk with God and started reading the writings of Jonathon Edwards, a Puritan who, one hundred years earlier had inspired a "great awakening" in the nation. Charles Finney retreated to the woods and in his autobiography describes the scene when he received the Holy Ghost in those same woods. He roared out of those woods and some of the greatest revivals that America experienced issued forth from his intensity with God.

- Fast forward to the year of 1901, one hundred and three years ago and you will find two men who would usher in fulness of Pentecost. Charles Parham in Kansas instructed a small group of Bible School students to go home over the Christmas holidays and read the book of Acts. They were to find out what sign marked the infilling of the Holy Ghost. They returned and informed Parham that the initial sign was that people would speak with tongues. He inquired, "Does anyone want this experience?" A woman came forward, her name was Agnes Ozman. She sat down in a chair and the other students gathered around and Charles Parham laid his hands on her and she began to speak with tongues. Before it was over, all the other students and Parham himself would experience the Holy Ghost.

- One other man was also instrumental in this effort by God. While God was working with Parham in Kansas, there was an itinerant preacher named W. J. Seymour who wanted more of God too. He traveled from the

lowland swamps of Louisiana to Kansas to find out about this experience. Before it was over with, William Seymour would experience the Holy Ghost and he ended up in Los Angeles at a little horse stable on Azusa Street. This cleaned up barn became a place for revival that would mark the last century.

-In fact, when Life Magazine, at the turn of the new millennium began to determine what the one hundred greatest events that shaped the last century, the Pentecostal outpouring as listed in the Top Ten. While the religious world laughed and scoffed at this phenomena and called its adherents holy rollers and poor ignorant folks who just did not understand, this Pentecostal experience has out-lived the critics and the charlatans. It is pressing on as never before.

***Acts 5:34-39 KJV*** *Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; [35] And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. [36] For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught. [37] After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. [38] And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: [39] But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.*

#### **IV. WHERE WE ARE TODAY....**

-This church started in an old house 37 years ago. Not much to look at on South Saint Andrews. The floors were rotting out. Funds were short but hope was high. We moved from there to where we are now. Except we were in two old houses. One served as the church and the other little building served as an educational wing and family life center. Those were torn down and this church was built. A lot has happened in these four walls since 1976. On every move, to step a little higher, there has been some trepidation and fear but God has been working night shift for a long time now.

-Sometimes preachers get a little tired and we get a little weary from the battle. . . . . 60 in attendance. . . . . three runs for people all came up empty. . . . . but long before all of that started an east wind begin to blow during the night. . . . . around a table up in Tennessee a group of folks decided to come for a visit. . . . . They drove all night long. . . . .

-Last year on Pentecost Sunday, we paid this place off. . . . . If we will just do what we are supposed to do, then God will do what He is supposed to do.

-God works when we cannot see Him working. . . . .

- There are times when the tears fall to the pillow deep in the night.
- There are times when doubt clouds the vision.
- There are times when fear overtakes our faith.
- There are times when deadness prevails over revival.

-God has withdrawn into the night. Too often, we look at what's wrong with the Church but today we ought to see what is right with the Church. The Church will press on until the Rapture.